

# Teachers' Views of Social-Emotional Skills and Their Perspectives on Social-Emotional Learning Programs

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## Abstract

This research aimed to understand primary teachers' views of primary teachers' social-emotional learning and social-emotional learning programs in Turkey. Findings revealed that although most of the teachers had heard of the concept of social-emotional learning, they could not give a detailed explanation of it. Additionally, most of them were not aware of the Emotional and Social Development program implemented since 2012 in Turkey. The findings imply that teachers should be informed about social-emotional learning and that efforts should be made to implement the Emotional and Social Development program effectively. Through this research, primary teachers' views of social-emotional learning were identified for the first time in Turkey. Hence, findings will help researchers, teacher trainers and teachers, as well as policy makers, to develop students' social-emotional learning skills and acknowledge the social-emotional learning programs.

**Keywords:** Social-emotional learning, social-emotional skills, primary teacher

## 1. Introduction

Social-emotional learning involves children's self-awareness, social consciousness, decision-making skills, ability to establish relationships and self-management capacities (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg and Walberg, 2004). Therefore, it has an important role in children's lives. Social-emotional learning problems such as violent, child abuse, aggression, anti-social and maladaptive behavior, are rapidly increasing worldwide (Cohen, 1999; Hamburg, 1997; Mott Foundation, 1994). Considering children's off-school experiences, it has been seen that social-emotional learning affects students' self-recognition and self-acceptance, improves skills such as communication and empathy, prevents use of drugs, violence and bullying and provides life-long learning (Zins, 2004). Besides, social-emotional learning also contributes to the extracurricular activities of children (Zins et al, 2004). This makes social-emotional learning a crucial part of children's education (Cohen, 1999). Therefore, teachers and specialists play an important role in helping children to overcome their social-emotional problems (Anliak, 2004; Durlak et al. 2011; Ryan, Gheen & Midgley, 1998; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Social-emotional learning programs aim to increase teachers' classroom management skills, develop teacher-student relationships and help students to acquire social skills. They also develop students' problem-solving and anger-management skills (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2010). Teachers' social welfare, classroom management and communication skills improve when they have experience teaching social-emotional learning skills (Karimzadeh et al, 2012; Ocak & Arda, 2011; Webster-Stratton et al, 2012). Researchers stated that teachers help their students to acquire academic skills as well as to develop their social-emotional skills. Thus, this influences teachers' personality and welfare (Rose & Gallup, 2000). Teachers who have well-developed social and emotional competence encourage students to take part in solving conflicts among themselves, help students to collaborate, and establish positive communication in their classrooms (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, teachers need to be trained in social-emotional learning and programs and in how to use materials effectively to develop their students' social-emotional skills (Greenberg & Kusche, 2006).

When schools effectively implement social-emotional programs, they can build caring relationships among students, help improve children's academic achievement, decrease behavioural problems, and provide students warmer classroom environments (Elias, 2006). There are many social emotional programs that aim to prevent behavioral problems and develop students' social-emotional skills, such as You Can Do It!, PATHS, First Step and I Can Problem Solve, throughout the world. Turkey implemented its Emotional and Social Development program in 2012.

Previous studies revealed that there has been much research focused on social-emotional learning. For example, researchers investigated teachers' knowledge (Buchanan et al, 2009; Talvio et al, 2013), teachers' perceptions (Poulou, 2007; Ransford et al, 2009; Trilivis & Poulou, 2006) and teachers' beliefs (Brackett et al, 2012; Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013) of social-emotional learning, as well as teachers' views of social-emotional learning problems (Briesch et al, 2012) and the relationship between classroom management and social-emotional learning (Collie et al, 2012). Examining this research closely indicated that teachers' knowledge of social-emotional learning is limited and that this leads to lack of social-emotional care for students. However, teachers become more knowledgeable when they participate in teacher effectiveness programs on

social-emotional learning (Buchanan et al, 2009; Talvio et al, 2013). Research revealed that teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning influenced their socio-cultural status and that teachers are willing to gain social-emotional competence (Buchanan et al, 2009; Trilivia & Poulou, 2006). Many research show that although teachers have limited knowledge of and competence in social-emotional learning, they believe in the importance of social-emotional learning in the teaching-learning process and use some activities to develop students' social-emotional skills in practice (Brackett et al, 2012; Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Additionally, teachers use their own social-emotional learning skills to solve students' problems they have encountered in the classroom. Accordingly, this helps teachers to manage their classrooms effectively and to use social-emotional learning skills in their teaching with respect to their own capacities (Briesch et al, 2012; Collie et al, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Reviewing the research showed that research carried out on social-emotional learning is very limited in Turkey (Kabakçı & Korkut, 2010; Samur, 2011 Totan & Kabakçı, 2010). These limited studies are usually focused on pre-school students' social-emotional learning skills. However, social-emotional learning should include all stakeholders and involve a wide age range of students, from pre-school to high school (Cohen, 2001; Tünnüklü, 2004) Furthermore, there is some research examining teachers' views of social-emotional learning, but the research focused on solely after-school social-emotional programs like summer camps or youth clubs (Kayalar, 2016). We need to conduct research to investigate primary teachers' views of social-emotional learning in depth. This will contribute to the teachers', academicians', educational policy makers' and all stakeholders' awareness of social-emotional learning. Thus, this research aimed to understand primary teachers' views of social-emotional learning. It also aims to explain what teachers know and think about socio-emotional learning through their own expressions. The findings of this research will help us to understand what needs to be done in order to develop students' social-emotional skills in primary education in Turkey. Findings will also contribute to the students' academic achievement by increasing awareness of the importance of solving social-emotional problems that students experience in school.

### **Research Aims**

This research focused on understanding primary teachers' views of primary teachers' social-emotional learning and social-emotional learning programs through their own statements. Accordingly, the research aims are stated as follows:

- to understand how primary teachers describe social-emotional learning
- to understand the role of social-emotional learning in the learning-teaching process from the point of view of the primary teachers
- to understand how we can help primary teachers to increase their awareness of social-emotional learning

## **2. Methodology**

Regarding the aims of this research, qualitative research methods were considered the most appropriate methods for this research. Qualitative research allows researchers to examine complex details about a subject, examining relationships among social events, cultural phenomena and societies through their lives, experiences, behaviours, perspectives, views, emotions and feelings (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Since this research aims to understand primary teachers' views of social-emotional learning, qualitative research methods are thought to be appropriate. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory approach is loosely followed to analyse the data. Consequently, open and axial coding is used in this research.

### **2.1. Sampling**

Maximum variation sampling is used, which allows us to capture and identify central themes that represent a great diversity (Patton, 2002). In order to gain in-depth and detailed information on social-emotional learning the researchers wanted to involve teachers with a wide range of experiences. Therefore, primary teachers who work in the city centre as well as those who work in different districts and villages participated in the research. Sampling also involved teachers with varying lengths of experience. The details regarding the participants are stated in Table 1.

Table. 1. Teacher Profiles

Teachers	Place	Experience	Education	Type of School	Position
Teacher 1	Village	13 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 2	City Centre	13 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 3	City Centre	32 years	Institute of Education	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 4	City Centre	6 years	Institute Of Educational Sciences/ Master Degree	Private School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 5	City Centre	9 years	Institute Of Educational Sciences/ Master Degree	State School	School Principal (Classroom Teacher)
Teacher 6	City Centre	36 years	Institute of Education	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 7	City Centre	12 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 8	City Centre	37 years	Institute of Education	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 9	District	18 years	Faculty of Economics And Administrative Sciences	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 10	District	19 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 11	City Centre	28 years	Undergraduate Education	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 12	City Centre	19 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	School Manager (Classroom Teacher)
Teacher 13	District	20 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	State School	Classroom Teacher
Teacher 14	City Centre	2 years	Faculty of Education/Bachelor	Private School	Classroom Teacher

## 2.2. Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews in this research. In semi-structured interviews, the researchers follow a flexible interview guide consisting of open-ended questions (Büyüköztürk et al, 2012). In this type of interview, researchers interview the participants in a conscious, ordered and partially structured manner (Büyüköztürk et al, 2012; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lodico et al, 2010). First of all, interview questions were prepared by the researchers. Then, the questions were sent to four other researchers who are experts in educational sciences to assess the validity. Regarding their suggestions, questions were revised. Following the expert reviews, four primary teachers were also asked to read the questions and evaluate them. The questions were modified according to the teachers' feedback, and the interview form was finalised.

Permissions both from the teachers and the Ministry of National Education have been obtained. It was considered crucial that participants are volunteers. First of all, teachers were informed about the aims of the research. Then, they were told that a voice recorder would be used during the interviews, but that their identities would be kept secret. Data were collected during the 2014-2015 academic year.

After transcribing the data, two participants were required to review their own transcriptions and submit them back to the researchers. Thus, they were asked to inform the researchers if they wanted to make any revisions of the transcriptions. This increased the internal reliability of the interviews.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

After transcribing, the data were analysed through using open coding and axial coding. Open coding includes defining, naming, categorizing, and describing the states in a data set (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In open coding, each line is read, and the researchers asks each sentence and paragraph the questions of "what is this about? and

“What is the point?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process in which data are analysed line by line to generate initial categories is also called microanalysis. Axial coding aims to reassemble the data that were fractured during the open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, the categories are related to their subcategories, helping the researcher find both more precise and broader explanations of the phenomena. Through the open and axial coding process in this research, the categories “Importance of Social-Emotional Learning in the Learning-Teaching Process” and “Teachers' Views on Social-Emotional Learning” emerged as main categories.

### 3. Findings

#### Importance of Social-Emotional Learning in the Learning-Teaching Process

Findings indicated that majority of the primary teachers who participated in the research could not give a detailed explanation about the concept of social-emotional learning:

I suppose I heard about it when I was studying at the university, social, affective, err, but I don't remember it like this. (Teacher 2)

So (...) Hmm I have read in the personal development books, I have heard it there, especially in pre-school education, I have also heard it when I was studying at the university, but nobody explained this to us in detail. (Teacher 7)

Well, I first heard it from you, I did not hear of it previously. (Teacher 12)

Apart from Teacher 12, the teachers stated that they had heard of the concept of social-emotional learning previously. However, they also stated that they did not have detailed information about what this concept means. For example; Teacher 2 and Teacher 7 claimed that although they had heard of the concept when they were students at the university, they could not fully explain the concept in detail. Teacher 7 stated that she had read about the concept in personal development books. These explanations pointed out that a majority of the primary teachers did not have knowledge about social-emotional learning. Primary teachers do not take social-emotional learning as a separate course during their pre-service education. However, issues related to social-emotional learning are involved in other courses, such as Educational Psychology and Educational Guidance (Higher Education Council [HEC], 2007). Although, in Turkey, primary pre-service teachers have needed to undergo four years of teacher training at a university since 1990, there are still primary teachers who were trained in different ways previously. Examining the data closely, both Teacher 2 and Teacher 7, who associated the concept with social development, emotional development or social learning, received four years of teacher training in the university and have over ten years of professional experience. On the other hand, Teachers 10 and 12, who stated that they have never heard of the concept, were graduated from the Institute of Education and had 2 years of education. One of them has 36 years of experience in teaching, the other 19. This shows that teachers who have over ten years of experience but did not have four years of training in the university do not have awareness of social-emotional learning. Teachers who have their training at the university are familiar with the concept of social-emotional learning. This shows that teacher training programs help teachers to be aware of educational developments.

Although the vast majority of the teachers state that they do not know about social-emotional learning, they have tried to explain students' social-emotional development through communication, anger control, respect, awareness, empathy, self-expression, happiness and success:

*Now, students' social and emotional learning means to me, communication, anger management, respecting each other and respecting differences, Hmm, like this (Teacher 3)*

*Students' communication with the environment, socially (...) communicating with friends is very important, students who cannot communicate with their friends cannot be successful, for example if children cannot play with each other, cannot respect each other, they cannot be successful, for example, the teacher can be unable to provide classroom management or students have to respect their teacher and their friends' rights, students have to obey classroom rules, school rules, neighbourhood rules, then this goes across countries to world-wide, the child educated through these becomes more open-minded and more visionary (Teacher 8)*

*From the social-emotional side, Hmm, I suppose becoming more self-confident, when their developments are increased socially, emotionally, they will be more self-confident, this contributes to their way of expressing themselves, I mean (...) it is actually to behave naturally, students who express themselves are MORE HAPPY MORE PEACEFUL, I think, and able to establish better dialogues (Teacher 9)*

Examining the explanations above revealed that all teachers who participated in the research emphasize the contribution of social-emotional learning to students' communication. For example, Teacher 3 explained social-emotional learning by referring to issues such as anger control and respect for each other's thoughts, which are also associated with communication. Similarly, Teacher 8 emphasized the importance of students' communication with their friends. Teacher 9 explained social-emotional learning as establishing better dialogues among students. This also implies communication. However, Teachers 3 and Teacher 8 also indicated that

social-emotional development involves being respectful. Teacher 9 tried to explain social-emotional learning through self-confidence, self-expression and peacefulness.

The teachers' explanations above show that the concepts they use to express their students' social-emotional development are similar to the definitions of Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL] which is an organisation that aims to establish high-quality social-emotional learning from preschool through high school education (CASEL, 2013). CASEL (2013) identifies social-emotional learning in five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, establishing healthy relationships and responsible decision-making. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy although the teachers attempted to explain social emotional learning, they could not fully describe it. For example, when teachers described social-emotional development, they referred to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and establishing a relationship. However, it is important to point out that they did not explain responsible decision-making. This can be explained in two ways: One of the possibilities is that since teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about social-emotional learning, they could not explain it. Another possibility may be that teachers mostly faced problems with students' ability to express themselves, communicate, and control anger and show respect; therefore, they only explained social-emotional learning through these concepts.

Many teachers emphasised the importance of being aware of the individual's own feelings and thoughts, empathy, establishing a healthy and positive relationship, decision-making and self-management in social-emotional learning:

...not only in learning and teaching, but also it contributes students' whole lives, they can be aware of what to do, they recognize "what my weaknesses are" and "what my potentials are", develop students' self-confidence, they do not hesitate to embark upon new things, they do not hesitate to cope with problems, they do not behave as timidly, they behave bravely, they make sense, and this also causes them to be more successful academically and socially. (Teacher 4)

How can I say, I mean one who thinks healthily makes reasonable decisions...students who cannot get along well disturbing each other with behaviour, this affects teaching and FOCUSING ON COURSE, so when we observe this we try instantly to solve the problem (...) for example there are two female students who are related, they had a problem last week, and this truly affected their focusing on the course... we have a problem with showing empathy, as we saw even yesterday (...) one of my students was killing the worms in garden, he said 'I crushed it', I said 'you put yourself into that worm, you could have been born as a worm, do you want to die because of another's desire?' Hmm NO, our students do not empathize, it is very important for emotional development but they do not, not yet. (Teacher 13)

Children who have problems regarding confidence never make healthy decisions, they are constantly waiting for me to instruct them. (Teacher 10)

It is very important to control feelings of anger, of course (...) other feelings as well, for example joy, extreme joy as well as extreme sadness affect children negatively ... (Teacher 1)

Teacher 4 stated that students' awareness of their own feelings and thoughts will lead them to be more successful and that being aware of their own competences will help them to become sociable by taking more brave and logical steps. The teacher also emphasized the importance of academic and social success by expressing his own courage in solving the problems he faced. Teachers such as Teacher 4 also stated that students' awareness of their own feelings and thoughts plays an important role in the learning-teaching process. Teachers' explanations of self-awareness are also defined by CASEL (2013). CASEL (2013) explains self-awareness as individuals' awareness of their own feelings and thoughts. Considering this statement, it appears that most of the teachers have an idea about the importance and consequences of the individuals' awareness of their own feelings and thoughts. Teacher 13 stated that problems among the students influence the class negatively. Teacher 13 additionally stated that empathy is important for people to be peaceful and happy. The teachers stated that although they try to explain the importance of empathy to their students, students do not empathize. Teacher 10 emphasized that a child who has problems with being confident cannot make effective decisions. S/he will mostly become dependent on teachers or parents when s/he makes decisions. Teacher 1 stated that feelings, both negative and positive, should be controlled. First, second and third graders have problems regarding controlling feelings.

The vast majority of the teachers stated that students' self-awareness, empathy, self-management, establishment of relationships and decision-making are important in developing social-emotional skills, as well as allowing for effective classroom management and increasing academic achievement:

Some students wants to show off and if they can't, they try to show off through other things, for example they dress in a different way to express themselves or behave strangely. (Teacher 6)

If students can communicate with each other, they can be successful; otherwise, they have problems. (Teacher 8)

Teacher 6 stated that students who are weak in social-emotional development try to attract attention to

themselves by means such as appearing differently and being in unexpected ways, and this affects classroom order. Teacher 8 emphasized the importance of academic achievement in positive classroom settings. These explanations point out the importance of students' abilities to solve conflicts and communication skills.

Teachers stated that the school environment is an important factor in social-emotional learning. Teachers participated in this research work in different places, such as a city centre, towns and villages. Their responses to the interview questions revealed that where students live influences their social-emotional development:

...I worked in the villages for years and now I have been working in the town for 2 years, I did not work in the city centre, but I know my friends who work in the city centre, the environment is very effective and helps children to gain confidence and courage, but they are spoiled, children who live in villages are very, very respectful and they obey the rules more, but students are more passive in expressing themselves even if they are smart or hardworking. (Teacher 10)

In fact, school location, if that is placed in the city centre, town, I mean schools' locations are very important; for example, I was working in a village until last year as a school manager and I realized that children did not even go to the science fair which took place in the village, when we went there first time, they were very surprised, the fair had been taking place for 5 years and we realized it now...gaining rich experiences are important. (Teacher 5)

Teacher 10 stated that he previously taught in a village, and he had also worked in a town. The students' and parents' profiles in city centres differ from those in villages and towns. For example, he pointed out that the students as well as parents who live in a village have difficulty expressing themselves compared to people in city centres. Teacher 5 stated that the students who live in city centres have more advantages than those who live in a town. This is an important issue for developing students' social-emotional learning. The explanations above show that the places where students live influence their social-emotional development. Overall, students who live in towns or villages are found to have difficulties in expressing themselves, and their parents often spend less time on their children. However, students who have economic advantages and who come from caring families can be selfish. Teachers' explanations indicate that the schools' social environments and the parents' financial, educational and cultural situation education play an important role in social-emotional development.

#### Teachers' Views on Social-Emotional Learning Programs

The interviews revealed that many primary teachers are not aware of the Emotional and Social Development program (2012), which is acknowledged by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey:

*I do not know as a curriculum, we conduct it as teachers, but I do not know if it is a course.*  
(Teacher 3)

*Well, I do not know (...) is there any practice with this? I mean is there any school conducting this?* (Teacher 12)

No, I do not think I know this is a curriculum. (Teacher 11)

No, never ever. (Teacher 6)

I truly would study with this, I want to get more knowledge and I think it is very important to conduct this curriculum if it is approved. (Teacher 13)

Is that grounded on course books? (Teacher 4)

No, I do not hear it, is there? Where is it? (Teacher 14)

All of the teachers indicated that they have heard about the Emotional and Social Development lesson for the first time during the interviews, although they consider socio-emotional learning to be important in their roles as primary teachers. Both during and after the interviews, the teachers told the researcher that they wanted information about the program. Though most of the teachers stated that they haven't been informed about the Emotional and Social Development program, very few teachers related their unawareness of the program to their own inadequacy in following the current developments in education. Informing the teachers about the Emotional and Social Development course by the Ministry of National Education is of great importance for developing students' social-emotional skills. It is worth noting here that teachers' failure to learn about the Emotional and Social Development program can be explained through lack of attention to lifelong learning skills. Lifelong learning is explained as the need for continuing learning in light of changing knowledge and technological developments with the help of new knowledge, skills and attitudes (Konokman & Yanpar-Yelken, 2014). This points out the need for the primary teachers' development of lifelong learning skills.

Few of the teachers thought that social-emotional learning should be treated as an independent lesson, while most of them felt it should be included in other courses:

Absolutely necessary, but it cannot be a separate course, it can take place in Leisure Activities Time hours or Play and Physical Activities Time hours...I feel the lack of it in Turkey, when one looks at the community many people are not individuals, many people care about others' decisions, someone make decisions for me, I do not want to think, I want others to think for me. (Teacher 10)

I WANT, there is Leisure Activities Time for 5 hours weekly, it is useless, why? What can I

conduct for 5 hours in a year? I am insufficient and lack school infrastructure (...) I mean this course is not useful, this can replace it, it can cover a curriculum, we need training in how to conduct it, I need to improve myself, I really raise my students (Teacher 6)

Teacher 10 indicated that social-emotional learning should be integrated into a lesson rather than stand as a separate lesson, and stated that there were not many adults who had developed social-emotional behaviour in Turkish society. Teacher 6 stated that social-emotional learning could be integrated into another lesson instead of being taught as a separate lesson. However, Teacher 1 stated that although subjects related to social-emotional learning are included in courses such as Life Science and Turkish; it must be taught as a separate lesson:

*You say this already takes place in Life Sciences and Turkish Lessons, but sometimes we cannot teach all learning outcomes, some curriculum are highly intensive, so it must be separate, and it must include even ethical values (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 1, unlike the above teachers, states that social-emotional learning should be treated as a separate lesson because the topics are too intensive in the other lesson, so the subjects related to social-emotional learning are not receiving enough time. Taking these concerns into consideration, some teachers suggest that social-emotional learning needs to be given implicitly in the various lessons, but a small proportion of the teachers think it should be a separate lesson. However, all the teachers agree that social-emotional learning has an important place in the learning-teaching process and that teacher education should be given for the implementation of this program.

#### **4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions**

Findings in this study revealed that most of the teachers have not heard of the concept of social-emotional learning before. However, the interviews' results indicated that the teachers who do know of the concept do not have adequate information about it. The literature also supported this finding. Previous research similarly showed that teachers do not have enough knowledge about socio-emotional learning, and their experiences are inadequate on this issue (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014; Zakrzewski, 2013). Findings emphasized that even though many of the teachers pointed out that they had not heard of the concept of social-emotional learning previously, they did use some activities to develop their students' social-emotional skills. This shows that when teachers meet with the problems related to social-emotional development in their classes, they try to solve these problems. Previous literature reveals that there has been some research conducted on social-emotional learning in the learning-teaching process at the level of primary and secondary schools in Turkey (Demirtaş, 2007, Hiloglu & Cenksevenönder, 2010 Körler, 2011; Kartal & Bilgin, 2007, Kartal & Bilgin, 2008; Ergül, 2008). This research mostly focused on social and emotional behaviour disorders. Thus, the findings suggest that although teachers try to develop their students' social-emotional learning when they meet problems in their classrooms; their practices can be more effective if they have adequate information. Besides, considering the findings of this research, teachers are interested in and willing to learn about social-emotional learning skills. Similarly, Collie, Shapka and Perry (2011) have shown that teachers volunteer to improve their own and their students' competences in social-emotional learning. Consequently, the findings show that teachers are willing to learn about social-emotional learning and apply these programs in their classrooms.

The interview findings also showed that teachers try to explain social-emotional learning through concepts such as communication, anger control, respect, awareness, empathy, self-expression, happiness and success. Examining previous research also revealed that teachers explained social-emotional learning through social skills (Fox and Lentini, 2006) and social and emotional difficulties (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). As stated above, although teachers have inadequate knowledge to define social-emotional learning, we can say that they still have some idea of it.

Most of the teachers were not aware of the Emotional and Social Development Program. When they heard about it for the first time, most of the teachers were interested in it. They wanted to teach the program. Teachers have also stated that their awareness of social-emotional learning is important to enhance their students' social-emotional development. A majority of the teachers stated that they allow their students to express themselves. Also, teachers claimed that they are trying to keep their students' self-confidence high, encourage them in many ways and so on. The literature also supported their statements. Teachers motivate their students to learn, to make efforts to increase their academic performances, to adopt active learning and to advance their social-emotional development to better prepare them for society (Elias et. al, 1997). In this context, it can be said that the teachers consider students' social-emotional development as an important issue and try to improve their social-emotional skills.

Teachers' responses to the interviews showed that the social environment in which students live is important in students' social-emotional development. It influences the social and cultural structure of the family. According to the teachers who participated the research, students who live in the city centres have stronger social-emotional skills than the students who live in towns and villages. Similarly, some research indicates the

importance of the school's environment on students' social-emotional development. For example, students' social-emotional learning skills differ regarding where they live (Bierman, Coie & Dodge, 2010; Durlak et al. 2011; Payton et al. 2008). Based on these findings, it can be said that students who live in urban areas have higher social-emotional skills than students who live in rural areas.

The vast majority of the teachers stated that it is easier to provide effective classroom management in classrooms consisting of socially-emotionally balanced students. Teachers often meet social-emotional problems in their classrooms such as attacks, anti-moral acts, opposition to authority, classroom disrespect and time-wasting (Charles, 1992). There are many research studies that focus on the relationship between social-emotional learning and classroom management; they found that students who have social-emotional learning problems negatively influence other students in the classroom, as well as the teaching-learning process (Elias, Zins, Graczyk & Weissberg, 2003; Emmer & Tough, 2001).

Teachers' statements revealed that social-emotional learning skills are already addressed in Turkish and Life Science lessons. Therefore, the teachers believed they do not need a separate program. However, some teachers suggested that it would be more useful to have a separate program. Previous studies have suggested that school-based social-emotional learning programs are necessary (Merrell, Juskelis, Tran and Buchanan, 2008) and that these programs have a positive effect on academic achievement (Greenberg et al. 2003; Zins et al. 2004). Besides, social-emotional learning programs increase students' emotional intelligence, emotional management and problem-solving skills (Greenberg et al. 2003; Lopes & Salovey, 2004; Özdemir-Beceren & Zembat, 2016; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004; CASEL, 2005). This showed us that school-based social-emotional learning programs are important and necessary to improve students' social-emotional skills.

This research focused on teachers' views of social-emotional skills and social-emotional learning perspectives. Based on the findings of this research, the following suggestions are made: Since teachers are willing to improve their social-emotional learning practices, in-service trainings that deal with social-emotional learning issues should be carried out. Furthermore, a wide range of research should be undertaken to address the opinions, beliefs, knowledge and practices of teachers on social-emotional learning. Efforts should be made to implement the Emotional and Social Development program effectively. In fact, finding out the effects of the Emotional and Social Development program on primary students will be essential to understanding the functions of the program.

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